



BEYOND THE EXHIBITS

North Carolina Museum of History

1920s Drug Store Exhibit

Imagine sipping a root beer float at the soda fountain or watching the pharmacist mix drugs with a mortar and pestle. Drugstores like this one, featuring original fixtures from the former J.C. Brantley Drugstore in downtown Raleigh, were once a constant center of activity in North Carolina.

Discover how 1920s drugstore differs from today's drugstore chains. The J.C. Brantley Drugstore fixtures, such as the massive marble counter at the soda fountain, large ornate mirrors, and mahogany cabinets, date to the 1890s, when the drugstore (originally the O.G. King Drugstore) first opened its doors on Fayetteville Street.

In the drugstore workroom, see where the pharmacist would grind medicinal herbs and compound drugs by hand to fill prescriptions. In the 1900s many North Carolinians relied on pharmacists to prescribe remedies since there was a shortage of physicians in rural areas.

Outside the workroom, the intriguing home remedy products and patent medicines (nonprescription, prepackaged medicines) seem unusual today. For those pesky intestinal worms, folks used St. Joseph's Worm Syrup. For coughs, they bought a bottle of white pine and tar syrup. For muscle aches, they rubbed on Sloan's Liniment, "an excellent counter-irritant," that was also useful on pigs, horses and other farm animals.

Below is additional information connecting our 1920s Drug Store to educational resources. For the richest student experience, complete the educational packet:

- Read "The Man Who Helped the World Breathe Easier" article from the Fall 2006 *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Read "Caleb Bradham and the Invention of Pepsi Cola" article from the Fall 2006 *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Watch "[History Mystery: Health and Healing](#)" Distance Learning Class and complete the accompanying activity.

The Man Who Helped the World Breathe Easier

by Lindsey Hinds-Brown*

Have you ever had a really bad cold that made it hard to breathe? If you have, chances are your parents used Vicks VapoRub to help you breathe easier. A man named Lunsford Richardson invented VapoRub right here in North Carolina.

Lunsford Richardson II was born on Parker Heights Plantation in Johnston County on December 29, 1854. The youngest of five children, he witnessed much suffering during his childhood. Richardson was only two years old when his father died in a flood. At age ten, he watched as the Union Army—led by General William Tecumseh Sherman—raided his home during the Civil War. The soldiers seized all his family's food and belongings, leaving behind only a few hams that he and his mother had hidden in the hollow columns of their house. After the Emancipation Proclamation freed their slaves, Richardson helped his mother adjust to a new way of farming and life.

Richardson knew he wanted to help others and needed a college education to achieve his goals. Unable to afford a full four years of college, he studied hard and completed his degree in only three years. He graduated from Davidson College in 1875 with a major in chemistry and honors' medals in Greek, Latin, and debate. The young graduate wanted to become a lawyer but had no money to start a law practice. Reluctantly, Richardson accepted a teaching position at a local school. He quit after five years. With only \$600 in savings, he wanted a fresh start and a career that combined his interests in chemistry and Latin.

While visiting his sister near Selma in 1880, Richardson bought a

small drugstore for \$450. He used his knowledge of Latin to understand the names on the bottles of medicine and researched the drugs to find out which ones would best treat his customers' symptoms. His dedication and hard work helped people in Selma feel better and helped him save enough money to marry and start a family.

After ten years in Selma, Richardson wanted to expand his business. He moved his family to Greensboro in 1890 and, with the help of his partner J. B. Fariss, bought the W. C. Porter Drug Store. Years later the building became famous for the two extraordinary men who had once worked there: Richardson himself and Mr. Porter's nephew, William Sidney Porter—the celebrated short-story writer known as O. Henry. Richardson changed the way drugstores operated in Greensboro. Before he took over, customers usually charged purchases to a store account and paid on the balance once or twice a year. His new policy required that customers pay their bills in full every month. This plan prevented farmers from building up large debts and guaranteed that storeowners got paid for what they sold. Soon all drugstores in the area followed his example.

Still, Richardson's greatest contribution to pharmacy was not his economic practicality but the medicines he invented. Customers trusted him, and they often asked him for medical advice when they could not afford to visit a doctor. Richardson saw the need for affordable treatments that worked. He began experimenting with new ingredients and invented twenty-one medicines he called Vicks Family Remedies.

Why Richardson chose the name Vicks for his products is something of a mystery. Some sources



These examples of the many Vicks products were packaged at the Vick Chemical Company in Greensboro in 1932 (VapoRub) and 1965 (cough syrup and sinus spray), respectively. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.



Lunsford Richardson II, a native of Johnston County, invented Vicks VapoRub. At one time, he was a Greensboro franchisee for Caleb Bradham's Pepsi-Cola, bottling the drink in the same building where he was packaging VapoRub. Image courtesy of the Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

state that he simply named them in honor of his brother-in-law, and others insist he ran across the name in a popular seed catalog. Richardson once claimed the main reason for the Vicks name was that it was short enough to fit on small medicine bottle labels!

Vicks Family Remedies became so popular that in 1898 Richardson sold his half of the drugstore to his former partner and started his own company. The L. Richardson Drug Company was a wholesale drug business that sold medicines to drugstores throughout the state. It also manufactured Vicks products. The top seller was a revolutionary external treatment for coughs and colds called Vicks Magic Croup and Pneumonia Salve.

Richardson first created this salve to treat his son's frequent bouts of "croup," a respiratory illness that made it hard for children to breathe. At the time, most treatments for croup required swallowing a pill or drinking a potion. Some of the medicines had serious side effects that made people

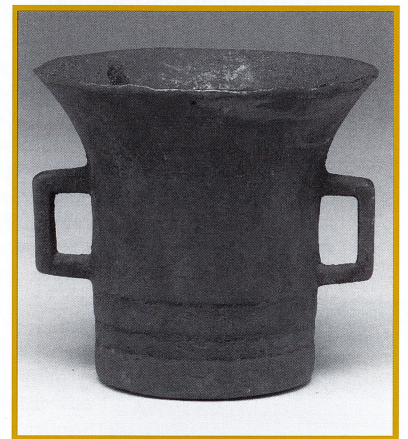
sicker than the original illness! But Vicks Salve was different. Richardson made an ointment using a new ingredient from Japan called menthol, which turned into vapor when heated. He combined menthol with the ingredients found in most cough and cold medications. When a patient rubbed Vicks Salve on his or her chest, body heat activated the menthol, and the patient breathed the medicated vapors directly into the lungs. This "magic" treatment eased patients' discomfort, and, best of all, there were no pills or potions.

Although Vicks Salve began as a simple home remedy, it soon became a household name. Richardson first made and packaged the medicine—in its unique, little blue bottle—by hand in a small Greensboro factory. But demand grew quickly, as salesmen traveled throughout North Carolina nailing some of the South's first billboards to trees and barns.

The widespread popularity of Vicks Salve brought many changes to Richardson's life. To make enough medicine, he made his factory larger and mechanized the manufacturing and packaging process. In 1905 he closed his wholesale drug company and created Vick Chemical Company to concentrate on his own products. His son, Henry Smith Richardson, joined the business in 1907 and convinced his father to make only Vicks Salve. The product's name was changed to Vicks VapoRub, not only to describe how the medicine worked but to stand out among numerous competitors.

Toward the end of Richardson's life, Vicks VapoRub became the leading treatment for coughs and colds throughout the United States. There was a great flu epidemic in 1918, and employees worked endlessly to meet customer demand. By 1919 VapoRub was sold in every state. In a speech given to the North Carolina Pharmaceutical Association a few months prior to his death, Richardson said, "I had seen a vision, I had dreamed dreams of a worldwide business."

Richardson passed away in August 1919,



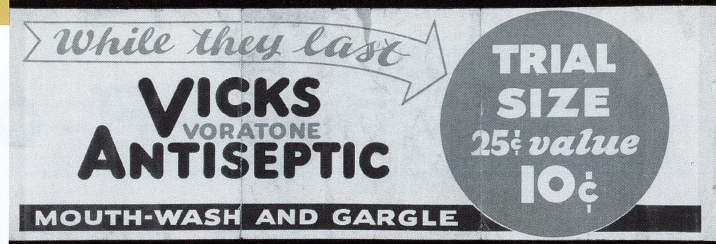
Lunsford Richardson used this mortar in the 1890s. Pharmacists used mortars along with small clublike tools called pestles to pound, grind, and mix ingredients for medicines. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.



In 1898 Lunsford Richardson opened the L. Richardson Drug Company, shown here in 1899, and began to sell his Vicks Family Remedies wholesale to drugstores throughout the state. Image courtesy of the Greensboro Historical Museum Archives.

but his legacy and vision live on. In the years after his death, a missionary school, a local hospital for African Americans, and a World War II Liberty ship were named in his memory. In 1935 his children established the Richardson Foundation to promote scientific and charitable projects. Today Procter and Gamble Company produces VapoRub and an extended line of Vicks products. Nearly ninety years after Richardson's death, his "magic" salve continues to relieve the discomfort of sick people throughout the world. 🌸

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Vicks products were advertised widely throughout the South. This window ad dates from the 1930s. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

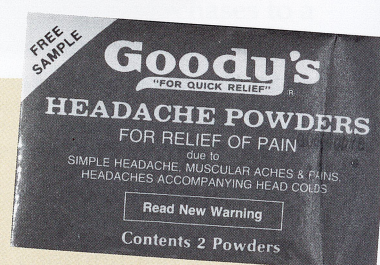
Activity: Fan Mail

The following is a letter sent to the Vick Chemical Company about the wonders of Vicks VapoRub. Although the story is somewhat of a "tall tale," it is one of many fan letters that Lunsford Richardson's company received. Have you ever considered writing a fan letter to someone? Think about an invention that you use every day, and try writing a letter to its inventor that tells him or her how much you enjoy the product.

Texas, 1917

No matter what happens, we won't part with the jar of Vicks. My son's puppy was slow crossing a railroad track and a fast train cut off his tail. We rubbed Vicks on him and it grew another tail.

The miracle, however, was performed when the little boy next door, who had always wanted a puppy, rubbed Vicks on the part of the tail that had been cut off and grew himself a dog!



advertising began.

Goody's Headache Powder:

Winston-Salem pharmacist Martin "Goody" Goodman created his headache powder in 1932. A. Thad Lewallen Sr. bought the formula and trademark a few years later. His marketing strategy based on sampling introduced Goody's Headache Powder to the Southeast and beyond. Samples were handed out to factory workers at shift changes. This promotional method created a dedicated following. Demand soon outstripped production. In 1941 a modern production facility and an increased sales force furthered boosted Goody's.

Bromo-Seltzer: Isaac Edward Emerson, a native of Chapel Hill and 1879 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, moved to Maryland in 1881. In 1888, working behind the prescription counter of a modest drugstore, he created a remedy for headaches and indigestion. His background in chemistry and pharmacy led to the granular effervescent salt he named Bromo-Seltzer and packaged in cobalt blue glass bottles.

—Suzanne Mewborn

Inventive Spirit: Pain Relief

When was aspirin invented? The father of modern medicine, Hippocrates, working between 460 and 377 BC, left records of pain-relief treatments that included the use of powder made from the bark and leaves of the willow tree to help heal headaches, body pains, and fevers. In 1829 scientists discovered a pain-relieving compound called salicin in willow plants. Salicylic acid was tough on stomachs. In 1853 Charles Gerhardt neutralized the acid but did not pursue marketing his new find. Several years later, Feliz Hoffman, an employee of German company Bayer, found Gerhardt's formula, marketed it, and sold it. Aspirin was patented March 6, 1889, and sold as a powder. Tablets came along in 1915.

raw materials and make their own prescriptions. Pills were harder for the local druggist to make, so pain-relief powders developed as a regional heritage.

BC Headache Powder: Pharmacists Germain Bernard and Commodore Council created their headache powder in 1906 at the Five Points Drug Company in Durham.

Stanback Headache Powder: Thomas Stanback, of Salisbury, created his headache powder in 1911, as a young pharmacist in a Thomasville drugstore. He moved to Spencer to work at the Rowan Drug Store while its pharmacist vacationed. There he gave samples of his new headache powder containing aspirin to railroaders, who carried it up and down the Southern line. Stanback persuaded his younger brother Fred to try selling the powders to area stores. Thomas prepared the product by night, and Fred sold it by day. Thomas used a flour sifter, then a sifter with a hand crank to speed production. The brothers began renting a building in Spencer in 1927 and sold their powders from Richmond, Virginia, to Columbus, Georgia. In 1932 a new Italian-made folding machine was purchased, and production moved to Salisbury. Full-scale national

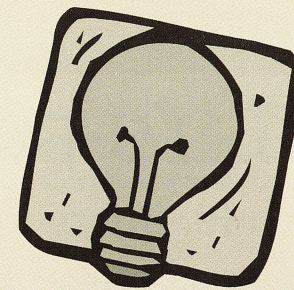
Why headache powders? It was very common for druggists in the early 1900s to buy



These packets of BC and Goody's headache powders were made in the 1960s and 1990s in Durham County and Forsyth County, respectively. Images courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Caleb Bradham

and the Invention of Pepsi-Cola*



No matter how old you are, "you're in the Pepsi generation." Before the cola wars, singer Britney Spears, or the Pepsi 400 race at Daytona International Speedway, Pepsi-Cola was part of American culture.

When Pepsi was invented in 1898, people bought carbonated sodas at the local drugstore. The beverages we think of as soft drinks were considered medicines in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They were used to treat everything from stomach problems to lack of energy. Pharmacists experimented with different ingredients and came up with flavored syrups for ginger ale, root beer, Coca-Cola, Dr. Pepper, and other beverages that we still sip today.

Carbonated water was added to these syrups to make soft



Caleb Bradham (1867–1934) invented Pepsi-Cola in his New Bern drugstore. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Pepsi-Cola's inventor, Caleb Davis Bradham, was born in Duplin County on May 27, 1867. Bradham attended local academies and then attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for three years. He left that school to study medicine



Over the years, Pepsi-Cola has been sold in bottles of different designs and colors. (Left to right) These bottles date from approximately 1934 (clear with red and white logo), 1890 (amber), 1940 (clear with red, white, and blue logo), 1925 (green), and 1900 (amber). Caleb Bradham estimated that he mixed about 7,968 gallons of Pepsi syrup in 1903. In 1907 about 104,029 gallons were mixed for sale through franchises. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

at the University of Maryland but had to drop out when he ran out of money. Later he returned to Maryland to study pharmacy. After holding several other jobs and completing his degree, he opened a drugstore in New Bern.

Like other druggists of his time, Bradham concocted different syrup mixtures for his store. Brad's Drink, as Bradham's friends first called it, was his customers' favorite beverage. He eventually renamed the drink Pepsi-Cola for the pepsin and cola nuts that were among its ingredients. In 1902 Bradham hired a manager for his pharmacy and began devoting more time to marketing his product, at first mixing the syrup in large barrels himself, selling it to other soda fountains and drugstores, and making deliveries by horse and wagon.

Pepsi-Cola expanded quickly, and by 1909 there were more than 250 bottlers in twenty-four states. By 1915 the company was worth more than one million dollars! But disaster struck. The price of sugar, one of the main ingredients in the drink, quadrupled when World War I erupted. Bradham bought a large amount of sugar because he thought the price would continue to rise. Instead, prices dropped a lot. Bradham also lost money when he invested in a new bottling method that failed to pay off.

In 1923 Bradham's drink company declared bankruptcy. Roy C. Megargel, a Wall Street broker, bought the Pepsi trademark, business, and goodwill for \$35,000 and formed the Pepsi-Cola Corporation. Bradham's luck ran out, but his invention lives on—around the world. 🌸

*This article, provided by the North Carolina Museum of History staff, first appeared in the Raleigh News and Observer as part of the Newspapers in Education program. Access <http://www.newsobserver.com/nie> for more on that program.

History Mystery Distance Learning Health and Healing

How do historians unravel mysteries of the past? What does “stuff” tell us about how people lived long ago? Learn why the investigative skills of observation, hypothesis, and analysis are important in understanding history! Start watching the video at

<https://www.ncmuseumofhistory.org/distance-learning/history-mystery/health-and-healing-form>.

Part 1: Observe Carefully

Describe the artifact in as many ways as you can.

Part 2: Make Hypotheses

Hypothesis #1 What might the artifact be used for?

What evidence supports your hypothesis?

Hypothesis #2 What else might this artifact be used for?

What evidence supports your hypothesis?

Part 3: Analysis

Decide which hypothesis best suits your artifact and complete the sentence below.

Now, read the statement:

We think our artifact was used for: _____,
because _____

_____.

History Mystery Distance Learning Health and Healing

Artifact 1 Image



Artifact 2 Image



Artifact 3 Image



Artifact 4 Image

